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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HULTGREN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
June 2, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable RANDY HULTGREN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY SHIFTS TO HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, in our fast-changing world, the global economy looms large. America has long been the leader in promoting freer and fairer trade, promoting the economy at home while strengthening ties overseas. The current issue that is before us now deals with a trade promotion authority and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an agreement with 12

countries, representing almost 40 percent of the global economy.

After the recent bipartisan vote in the Senate on the trade promotion authority and related package, attention now shifts to the House where we are likely to be voting on this in the next couple of weeks. Many confuse support for the trade promotion authority with the TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. They are two distinct items.

The Trans-Pacific Partnership is an ongoing series of negotiations which has yet to be concluded. Indeed, one of the reasons we are looking at trade promotion authority now, establishing the rules of the game and how Congress will evaluate and process it, is to make sure that we get into the final stages.

Trade promotion authority historically, something we have done repeatedly in the past, provides for Congress to vote on an up-or-down basis on a trade agreement once it is finalized. This is what happens in negotiations routinely in the United States, an up-or-down vote. I find it somewhat ironic that some of my friends in organized labor think that it somehow should be negotiated in Congress, that it ought to be subject to amendment in Congress. Yet there is no labor union that I am aware of that has its contracts voted piecemeal. Members aren't allowed to amend. It is up or down, and that is what is necessary to be able to reach a conclusion with these negotiations.

Some are demanding that Members of Congress oppose an agreement that is not yet completed. Well, I, for one, am not going to support or oppose an agreement until I can see what is in it and until the agreement is finalized. Until it is finished, I am going to continue to work to make it as strong as possible.

I have been working on provisions to strengthen enforcement, establishing a trust fund to make sure that provisions in trade agreements have the resources

to make sure that they are, in fact, enforced, such as having provisions known as the Green 301 that has greater strength to be able to enforce environmental provisions. This makes a difference for my community.

Oregon's small- and medium-sized businesses, family farmers, winemakers, bike manufacturers say that enhanced trade authority is critical to creating more jobs at home and increased value for customers. That is something that gets lost in this debate because, as a result of our policies promoting freer trade between countries, Americans have seen their standard of living increase. Americans today are paying less for clothing, less for food, less for electronics as a result of the benefits of these agreements. Some estimates say it is about \$8,000 per family.

Well, we will see what the current trade agreement looks like when it is completed. As I mentioned, the trade promotion authority is necessary to reach the final stages.

Thanks to the efforts of my friend and my constituent Senator RON WYDEN, the ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee, this trade promotion authority that we will be dealing with makes it mandatory that everybody in the country will be able to look at the final agreement for 60 days before the President even signs it, and then it will be public for another 90 days—5 months, essentially—before Congress will vote up or down on whether or not it is worthy of our support.

Well, I will do what I have done in trade agreements in the past. I will consider each element with the same principles: Is this package good for the people I represent in Oregon? Does it align with our values? Will it be a net positive for areas that I care about, like labor and the environment? More fundamentally, are we going to be better off with an agreement or with none?

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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PUTTING A STOP TO MISMANAGEMENT AT THE VA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, in 2014, Congress passed legislation with broad bipartisan support to improve access to and the quality of care for veterans in response to the nationwide scandal over manipulated wait times at the VA.

The Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act created a 3-year program to allow veterans to seek care from private providers if they live too far from a VA facility or cannot otherwise get an appointment within 14 days.

It also gave the VA Secretary the authority to fire senior executives for poor performance and required a top-to-bottom study of the entire Department to be completed within 1 year of enactment.

When government failure is exposed and legislation aimed at restoring accountability is enacted, it makes sense that action would be swift and immediate, people would be fired, and wrongs would begin to be made right. Unfortunately, that has not been the case at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

While there are as many as 1,000 employees that could potentially face disciplinary actions, the VA has punished a total of eight for involvement in the scandal. We continue to hear about unacceptable patient wait times, unanswered benefit inquiries, patient safety concerns, medical malpractice, flagrant mismanagement, infighting, corruption, and years of construction delays that total millions of dollars.

Frustration, anger, outrage, Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the words that describe how I and other Americans felt when we read these latest stories about problems within the Department of Veterans Affairs. The continued ineptitude at the highest levels of the Department of Veterans Affairs is simply unacceptable. It is past time to put an end to this agency-wide pattern of mismanagement.

Last month, the House continued its efforts to fulfill the commitment we have made to those who have served by approving several pieces of legislation to further improve accountability at the VA.

We also passed legislation to increase access to education programs for veterans and to encourage small businesses to hire them. While it will never be enough, this legislation is a positive step forward in meeting our responsibility to America's veterans.

However, Congress cannot transform the VA alone. It is the President's responsibility to ensure changes are made within the agency and that employees are held accountable for their actions. Unfortunately, that is not happening.

Every day, we hear only more stories about further misdeeds. President Obama must commit to reforming the VA with more than just lip service. America's veterans deserve a meaningful, decisive plan to right the many wrongs.

As a country, we are uniquely blessed. We live in a nation where each of us has the possibility of nearly limitless fulfillment and prosperity in the world's finest democracy. That unparalleled freedom and opportunity has been made available to us because of the profound sacrifices of those who have fought for and defended our Nation.

America's veterans deserve better than the inexcusable misconduct and neglect that we have seen over the last few years at the VA. It is critically important that we provide high-quality, timely care for those who have sacrificed so much to our country.

Republicans are committed to that principle and to the veterans of this country.

URBAN FLOODING AWARENESS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. QUIGLEY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress continue to debate whether or not climate change is real, Americans are paying the price. To the climate doubters that I serve with, I will remind them that there are over 200 peer-reviewed scientific studies that conclude that climate change is real and that man contributes to it, and there are zero peer-reviewed scientific studies that say the opposite.

Climate change often brings images to mind of melting icecaps and rising sea levels, but the effects of climate change are being felt every day by people around the country. Climate change is causing even more destructive storms which, when combined with our aging infrastructure, is resulting in cities around the country being pummeled by urban flooding.

A little more than 2 years ago, residents in my district endured their second 100-year flood in a mere 3 years. A 100-year storm means that there is a 1 percent chance that a storm of that magnitude will happen every year, but folks in Chicago are experiencing these storms with greater intensity and frequency.

The morning after the rains bombarded Chicago in 2013, I visited numerous community members and their homes. The damage I saw was devastating: thousands of homes and businesses flooded; tons of carpeting, furniture, and memories are ruined; businesses shattered; and entrepreneurs' dreams crushed, along with millions of dollars in damages.

Throughout the region, we saw the closure of schools, libraries, and even hospitals were forced to relocate patients. That kind of devastation cannot

be ignored. Our constituents cannot be ignored.

In Chicago, over the past century, we have seen countless storms that have caused pipes to back up into houses and dump upwards of 1.5 inches of rain in a single day. What is more, rains of more than 2.5 inches a day are expected to increase another 50 percent in the next 20 years.

The National Climate Assessment, released by the Obama administration last year, predicted that the frequency and intensity of the Midwest's heaviest downpours will more than double over the next 100 years. That means even more trouble for our Nation's already deteriorating infrastructure and the cities around the country that rely on that infrastructure to keep them safe. Storm drains are outdated; sewers are inadequate, and families are at risk.

Whether it is because of flooded pipes or the lack of permeable surfaces in our cities, our constituents are paying the prices. Thousands of households in America are affected every year by urban flooding, yielding catastrophic economic, environmental, and social damage in some of our country's largest cities. Basements with water damage decrease property values by an estimated 10 to 25 percent.

But the impacts don't end there. Chronically damp houses can cause respiratory problems and higher insurance costs. Additionally, almost two out of five small businesses cannot open after experiencing a flooding disaster. Urban flooding erodes streams and riverbeds and degrades the quality of our drinking water sources and the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

It is time we come up with a national response to this growing problem. That is why I am proud to introduce the Urban Flooding Awareness Act. This legislation will finally create a definition of urban flooding to be used when designing flood maps and will require a first-of-its-kind study to analyze the costs associated with urban flooding and develop solutions. It would also help us better protect downstream communities from the flooding impacts of development in upstream areas.

Existing regulatory and policy mechanisms are not adequate for this task. It is time we develop new strategies. By identifying the most effective and economical remedies to urban flooding, we are better preparing our communities to defend themselves against the devastation caused by increasingly intense weather.

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And investing in real solutions to this problem now is the only way to avoid higher costs down the road. We can learn from our successes and investigate innovative new strategies for funding crucial new programs that eliminate flood risk and damage. Our cities need the best tools available if they are going to survive this era of supersized storms.